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BABBLE OF THE BOULEVARD

(Special Correspondence of THE COLLECTOR)

PARIS, October 5, 1892.

FOR the past few days both local as well as provincial philatelists have been turning their steps toward the Exhibit of Postage Stamps, held in one of the great ornamental buildings that have been left standing upon the Champs de Mars ever since the Exposition of 1889. The show is a most complete and curious one, a number of unique and valuable collections having been loaned to its organizers by amateurs in every corner of the globe. One of its most interesting and yet most deplorable features is to be found in the innumerable objects of interior decoration, made attractive by the use of the tiny and variegated squares of paper. Interesting because they possess real artistic merit, and deplorable because it seems incredible that any real enthusiast could waste his time over the production of such rubbish. There are a number of plaques and panels on view which, at a distance, present the appearance of paintings in oil. They represent animals, flowers, landscapes, figures, or arabesque and mosaic work, the effect being produced by a dextrous arrangement and pasting upon the porcelain or wooden ground of an incalculable quantity of postage stamps. The exhibition will remain open for about a fortnight.

* * *

Emile Zola's latest novel, "La Débâcle," had scarcely made its appearance before it brought forth any number of letters in the press flatly contradicting certain passages and statements contained therein. To these the pessimistic author has replied with his customary independence and vigor. One writer takes Zola to task for depicting the generals of the French army who served during the war with Prussia as careless, stupid and incapable. Another is under the impression that the novelist is disposed to admit the superiority of the Teutonic forces. In reply Zola states tersely that he is and wishes to be accredited with both assertions, but that he has positively nothing to retract. All the generals, says he, from Louis Napoleon downwards were cowards. Bazaine was an imbecile, Canrobert and MacMahon (afterward President of the Republic) should have been court-martialed. De Failly was an ass, and Trochu a mere driveler seeking popularity. As to the superiority of the Germans over the French, it appears to the author of "La Débâcle" that the result of the great conflict was sufficient to determine that fact.

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But unfortunately these were not the only statements which Emile made wherewith to incite the ire of his readers. He had the temerity to observe that at the battle of Sedan the Emperor, in order to conceal the pallor of disappointment and defeat that was only too apparent on his face, painted his cheeks red. This, it is presumed, was done that the soldiers of the line might not believe their commander-in-chief terrified by the actual condition of affairs. Now Zola, unless I am greatly mistaken, is not the originator of this statement, and yet it has brought down a wrath of indignation upon his head. Louis Napoleon had, according to a number of his contemporaries, the ashy complexion of an opium eater. During the Crimean war, and especially at the battles of Solferino and Magenta, the son of Queen Hortense (like a gentleman in Edward Lear's "Book of Nonsense") was said to have turned perfectly green in moments of extreme peril. Besides, during the campaign of 1870, the Emperor was a sufferer from a most painful and agonizing malady. Yet Princess Mathilde Bonaparte, who together with Robert Mitchell and Paul de Cassagnac, strenuously repudiates M. Zola's assertion, refuses to believe that the Emperor could have used facial pigments on the occasion of the capitulation with Germany. And so it is that a short paragraph in a popular novel has given rise to the most bitter controversy imaginable. What does it matter whether Napoleon III painted his face or not? He certainly waxed his moustache and probably used pomatum on his hair. Suppose we discuss, for the sake of variety, the quality of tooth powder commonly employed by the unhappy ruler!

* * *

Mme. Agar, the tragedienne who died in Algiers about a year ago, had spent, like the Queen of England, much of her idle time in making a collection of dolls and other playthings. These objects of juvenile amusement came not only from every part of the world, but from almost every period of history since toys were invented. They were last week sold by auction, and whether on account of their intrinsic value or their pristine associations, brought unusually good prices.

* * *

Daubray, the comedian, is dead; and apropos of the purely civil rites with which he was interred, old Auguste Vacquerie, friend and companion of Hugo, writes the following in the *Rappel*: "They have buried Daubray; buried him without bell, candle or book. In other days it was the Church that refused to officiate at the last ceremonies of the thespian. Now the player refuses the services of the Church. The people are beginning to think as Lanennais, as Michelet, as Louis Blanc, as Edgar Quinet and as Hugo. We shall soon have

arrived at a period when mankind is no longer held in terror of the future state; all that is mortal of the human mould shall be consigned to its last resting place without having to pay the curé for his pains."

* * *

The reproduction in *fac-simile*, for the forthcoming Columbus Exhibition at Madrid, of the first chart on which the American continent appears, is approaching completion. The work is being done by Señor Canovas Vallejo, a nephew of the Spanish Premier. The original chart, which was traced in the year 1500 by the famous navigator and cartographer, Juan de la Cosa, who acted as pilot to Columbus, is preserved in the Naval Museum at Madrid. It presents a number of most interesting features, displaying, as it does, the extent of the knowledge of the best-informed geographers of the day. On it are depicted the West Indies and that portion of South America lying between the River Amazon and the Isthmus of Panama. To this land the general name of *Tierra Firme* is given. The map also indicates certain discoveries made in the Western Hemisphere by Sebastian Cabot in 1497.

* * *

Complaints have lately been frequent regarding the apparently wilful damage inflicted upon the beautiful groups of marble statuary in the Gardens of the Tuileries. During the days of the Empire the Imperial Gardens were protected by something like fifty uniformed guardians. Of recent years their number has been reduced to fifteen, though in view of the disfigurements the Minister of Public Works is about to make a special appropriation in order to provide sufficient surveillants to protect both bronzes and marbles alike.

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Touching the wilful destruction of monuments, there is one thing that at once impresses the visitor to London during his saunterings about the smoky city. In all the squares and parks where destructible material exists appears the simple and epigrammatic notice. "The Public is Requested to Protect its Own Property."

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Vannes, in Brittany, now possesses its statue of Le Sage, author of "The Devil on Two Sticks," and the erection in Paris of busts to both Charles Baudelaire the poet and Jean François Millet the artist is contemplated.

JOHN PRESTON BEECHER.

A large painting commemorating and portraying one of the most famous rescues at sea, called "And Every Soul Was Saved," by the English artist, John Napier Hemy, R. A., is now in Baltimore. The painting represents the saving of 733 persons, passengers and crew of the steamship *Denmark*, from Copenhagen, on April 6, 1889. The rescue was effected by Captain Hamilton Murrell, and the officers and sailors of the steamship *Missouri*, of the Atlantic Transport line, with headquarters in Baltimore. The painting is the property of the company of which Mr. B. M. Baker is president. It arrived after having been exhibited throughout England, and will go next to Philadelphia, after which it will make the round of other cities, and be shown at the World's Fair. Mr. Baker will present it to the city of Baltimore.

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